OUTRAGEOUS 1950s EC COMICS!
CRIME
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC
NO. 19
MAY
CRIME
SUSPENSTORIES
AN ENTERTAINING COMIC
2 50
3 45
CANADA
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JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
EC
TRADITION!

The Killer

JONATHAN SAT ON THE CRUDE WOODEN BENCH IN THE DAMP DARKNESS OF THE SMALL ROOM TURNING THE LATEST ITEM OVER AND OVER IN HIS NERVOUS FINGERS. OUTSIDE THE TINY BARRED WINDOW, THE DAWN LIGHT WAS JUST BEGINNING TO CLIMB INTO THE EARLY MORNING SKY. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY. HE'D *ALWAYS* MADE THINGS FOR ELSIE. *ALL KINDS* OF THINGS. BUT *THIS* ITEM... THAT HE'D JUST *FINISHED*... WAS TO BE THE *LAST* THING HE'D *EVER* MAKE FOR HER. HE SAT QUIETLY IN THE SHADOWS, STARING DOWN AT THE WORK WITH MIST-FILLED EYES, AND A SOB RATTLED IN HIS THROAT...

JONATHAN HAD *ALWAYS* BEEN GOOD AT MAKING THINGS WITH HIS HANDS... EVER SINCE HE'D BEEN A BOY. HE REMEMBERED THE MANY NIGHTS HE'D WORKED BY CANDLE-LIGHT IN HIS FATHER'S CELLAR...CARVING AND FASHION-ING AND BUILDING...

JONATHAN HAD WANTED *SO MUCH* TO DO SOMETHING WITH THE SPECIAL TALENT HE HAD FOR FASHIONING THINGS. BUT AS HE GREW INTO MANHOOD, HIS CHILD-HOOD DREAMS FADED. HE WAS EXPECTED TO FOLLOW IN HIS *FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS*...

NOW *YOU LISTEN* TO *ME*, JONATHAN! DON'T BE SO *SQUEEMISH!* THERE'S *GOOD MONEY* IN IT...
NO! I DON'T *WANT* IT. I'LL HAVE NO *PART* OF IT. I WANT TO *BUILD* THINGS... NOT *DESTROY THEM*...

JONATHAN REMAINED ADAMANT DESPITE HIS FATHER'S PLEADING...

NOTHING WILL STOP YOU FROM *MAKING THINGS* IN YOUR *SPARE TIME!* AND *NO ONE* WILL KNOW WHAT YOU *REALLY* DO!

I WILL *KNOW.* AND THAT WILL BE *BAD ENOUGH!*

BUT THEN, JONATHAN MET ELSIE AND FELL IN LOVE...

SOMEDAY, I WILL BE ADMITTED TO A *CRAFT-GUILD,* ELSIE, AND THEN WE CAN *AFFORD* TO BE *MARRIED.* BUT, *NOW...*

OH, JONATHAN! *I'LL WAIT!* I *WILL...*

JONATHAN REMEMBERED THE *FIRST THING* HE'D EVER *MADE* FOR ELSIE. IT WAS THE DAY HE PROPOSED AND THEY BECAME ENGAGED. HE CARVED A *HEART,* WITH THEIR *NAMES,* IN THE BARK OF A BEECH TREE...

OUR LOVE WILL BE LIKE THIS *HEART,* ELSIE. IT WILL *GROW WITH TIME!*

IT'S *BEAUTIFUL,* JONATHAN!

IN THOSE DAYS, IN ENGLAND, THE CRAFT-GUILDS WERE OVER-CROWDED. A MAN HAD TO BE PRACTICALLY *BORN* INTO ONE. AND JONATHAN'S FATHER WAS *HARDLY* A *GUILD MEMBER!* JONATHAN'S *FATHER'S* PROFESSION *HAD NO GUILD...*

WE HAVE *EXAMINED* YOUR WORK, YOUNG MAN, AND WE FIND IT TO BE *OUTSTANDING.* ER:..AH... *HOWEVER...*

WELL, THE *TRUTH IS,* JONATHAN, WE HAVE TO MAKE ROOM FOR OUR *OWN SONS.* SORRY...

Silversmiths' Guild Hall

SO JONATHAN WAS REFUSED ADMITTANCE INTO THE CRAFT-GUILDS. ELSIE LISTENED TO THE NEWS WITH TEAR-FILLED EYES...

BUT, HOW WILL YOU EARN A *LIVING,* JONATHAN? HOW CAN WE BE *MARRIED?* WE'VE *WAITED* SO *LONG!*

WE *WILL* BE MARRIED, DARLING! I'VE DECIDED TO *FOLLOW* IN MY *FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS..*

JONATHAN'S FACE GREW DARK AS HE MOUTHED HIS DECISION...

WHAT *IS* IT, JONATHAN? WHAT *DOES* YOUR FATHER *DO?* WHY DO YOU *DESPISE* HIS WORK?

I'D RATHER NOT *TALK* ABOUT IT, ELSIE. LET'S TALK ABOUT *US!*

JONATHAN RELUCTANTLY WENT TO HIS FATHER AND ANNOUNCED...

ELSIE AND *I* WISH TO BE *MARRIED,* FATHER, AND SINCE A MAN WHO IS TO BE *MARRIED* SHOULD BE *PAYING HIS OWN WAY,* I HAVE *DECIDED* TO... TO... *ACCEPT...*

JONATHAN! *MY BOY!*

JONATHAN SAT IN THE DAMPNESS OF THE PRISON AND REMEMBERED THE HOUSE HE'D MADE WITH HIS OWN TWO HANDS... THE LITTLE *COTTAGE* JUST OUTSIDE LONDON THAT HE'D *BUILT* FOR HIS *BRIDE*...

COME *DOWN*, JONATHAN! *LUNCH* IS READY...

IN A *MOMENT*, ELSIE!

AND HE REMEMBERED THOSE NIGHTS WHEN HE'D BEEN FORCED TO GET OUT OF BED BEFORE DAWN AND GO AWAY AND LEAVE ELSIE ALONE...

JONATHAN! IS THAT *YOU*?

GO BACK TO *SLEEP*, DARLING. I'M *GOING TO WORK*...

HE REMEMBERED THOSE NIGHT RIDES ACROSS THE ENGLISH COUNTYSIDE...

...THE FRIGHTENED FACES OF HIS VICTIMS...

...THE RELIEF OF FINALLY COMING HOME...

OH, JONATHAN! I'VE *MISSED YOU!* I'VE BEEN *SO LONELY!*

IT ISN'T *RIGHT*, ELSIE. A WOMAN *SHOULDN'T* BE LEFT *ALONE!*

AND THEN ELSIE'D TOLD JONATHAN THAT SHE WOULD NOT *BE* ALONE MUCH LONGER, AND HE REMEMBERED THE CRIB HE'D MADE FOR THE COMING BABY...

AND *RIGHT HERE*, I'LL *CARVE HIS NAME*...

IT MIGHT BE A *GIRL*, JONATHAN!

JONATHAN REMEMBERED HOW ELSIE WOULD ASK FROM TIME TO TIME...

WHAT *DO* YOU DO, JONATHAN? HOW *DO* YOU *MAKE THE MONEY WE LIVE ON*?

DON'T *ASK* ME, ELSIE. *PLEASE!* I *CAN'T TELL YOU!*

AND THEN, ONE DAY, A MESSAGE CAME FOR JONATHAN, AND HE REMEMBERED HAVING TO LEAVE ELSIE... WITH HER BABY ALMOST DUE...

AND JONATHAN REMEMBERED HOW HE'D RIDDEN MADLY THAT NIGHT, AND KILLED AND RIDDEN BACK EXHAUSTED TO FIND...

JONATHAN REMEMBERED THE LITTLE COFFIN HE'D MADE...

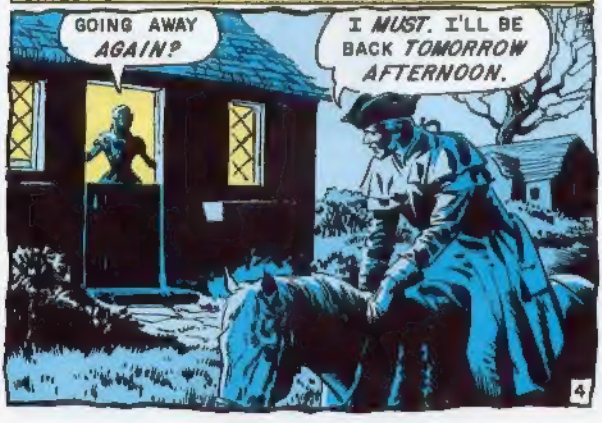
AND THE LITTLE CROSS HE'D CARVED FOR THE MOUND BEHIND THE HOUSE...

JONATHAN REMEMBERED ELSIE'S ANGER... HER BLAMING HIM...

WHAT IS IT? WHAT CAN THIS WORK OF YOURS BE TO HAVE PULLED YOU FROM MY BEDSIDE AT MY TIME AND LET OUR BABY DIE?
I CAN'T TELL YOU, ELSIE. I CAN'T TELL YOU!

AND JONATHAN REMEMBERED HOW ELSIE'D GROWN BITTER AND SILENT AND COLD. AND HOW HARD HE'D TRIED...

JONATHAN WAS PATIENT WITH ELSIE. HE KNEW SHE WAS GRIEVED AND HURT OVER THE LOSS OF HER CHILD. BUT HIS NIGHT RIDES CONTINUED...



JONATHAN SAT THERE IN THE DAMP STILLNESS OF THE PRISON, FONDLING THIS LATEST ITEM HE'D MADE FOR ELSIE... AND HE REMEMBERED HOW HE'D *LONGED* TO *TELL* HER OF THE *HORRENDOUS DEEDS* HE'D BEEN FORCED TO PERFORM...

OH, *ELSIE!* IF YOU *ONLY KNEW!* IF YOU *ONLY...*

WHEN WILL YOU BE *GOING AWAY AGAIN,* JONATHAN?

... AND HE REMEMBERED HOW HE COULDN'T BRING HIMSELF TO CONFESS...KEEPING HIS DARK SECRET LOCKED UP DEEP INSIDE HIM...

I... I DON'T KNOW *WHEN* IT WILL BE, ELSIE! *WHY?*

I WAS JUST *WONDERING...*

AND HE REMEMBERED HOW ELSIE SEEMED TO SUDDENLY LOOK FORWARD TO HIS GOING AWAY. HE REMEMBERED THE STRANGE LIGHT THAT CAME INTO HER EYES...

I'LL BE GONE A *LONG WHILE* THIS TIME, ELSIE. *THREE WHOLE DAYS...*

OH?

AND THEN JONATHAN REMEMBERED THAT HORRIBLE AFTERNOON WHEN HE'D COME HOME FROM HIS LAST TRIP AND FOUND THE COTTAGE IN A SHAMBLES... THE CUPBOARDS HE'D MADE, THE CHAIRS HE'D FASHIONED, THE TABLES... ALL *OVERTURNED... SMASHED... RUINED...*

ELSIE! WHERE ARE YOU? ELSIE!

AND THEN HE REMEMBERED SEEING THE HUGE *BLOOD-STAIN* ON THE FLOOR...

ELSIE!

AND THEN HE REMEMBERED HOW THEY'D *COME* FOR HIM...

WE'VE BEEN *WAITING* FOR YOU TO GET HOME, JONATHAN!

ELSIE! WHAT'S *HAPPENED* TO HER?

YOU'D *BETTER* COME ALONG WITH *US,* JONATHAN!

WHERE'S *ELSIE?* WHERE ARE YOU *TAKING* ME?

TO THE *PRISON,* JONATHAN! LET'S GO!

JONATHAN REMEMBERED HOW THEY'D TOLD HIM ABOUT ELSIE...
YOUR WIFE HAD BEEN CARRYING ON BEHIND YOUR BACK WITH ANOTHER MAN WHILE YOU WERE AWAY. THIS MORNING SHE AND HER LOVER HAD AN ARGUMENT. IN A FIT OF RAGE, ELSIE STABBED HIM...MURDERED HIM!
NO! NO! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
JONATHAN STARED OUT OF THE SMALL BARRED WINDOW AT THE GALLOWS WAITING IN THE DAWN LIGHT...
ELSIE!...SOB...MY ELSIE...
HE WATCHED AS HIS WIFE WAS LED UP THE WOODEN STEPS...
JONATHAN TURNED, AND THERE WERE TEARS IN HIS EYES...
YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW, ELSIE! YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW HOW I EARNED MY MONEY...
HE PICKED UP THE LAST THING HE'D EVER MAKE FOR ELSIE, AND HE CAME OUT OF THE DAMP LITTLE ROOM WITH THE BARRED WINDOW...
AND NOW YOU'LL FIND OUT, ELSIE...
JONATHAN CLIMBED THE STEPS OF THE GALLOWS SLOWLY...PAINFULLY. THE ITEM HE'D FASHIONED WITH HIS OWN TWO HANDS...THE ITEM HE'D MADE FOR ELSIE... HUNG LIMPLY AT HIS SIDE...
GASP...YOU...
YES, ELSIE...
HE SLIPPED THE ITEM AROUND ELSIE'S NECK... THE LOOP OF HEAVY ROPE WITH THE THIRTEEN KNOT COILS...
I AM THE HANGMAN!
6

WINED-UP!

YOUR NAME IS CHARLES ASHLAND. YOU ARE INDEPENDENTLY WEALTHY. YOU OWN A LUXURIOUS DUPLEX APARTMENT IN THE CITY AND A COMFORTABLE SUMMER HOME ON A LARGE LAKE. YOU HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR THREE YEARS. FIVE MONTHS AGO, YOU AND YOUR BEAUTIFUL WIFE, LAURA, WERE INVOLVED IN AN UNFORTUNATE AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT. LUCKILY, LAURA ESCAPED UNHARMED. AS FOR YOU, SINCE THEN YOU HAVE BEEN CONFINED TO A WHEEL CHAIR... A HELPLESS PARALYZED INVALID. NOW YOU ARE SITTING IN THAT CHAIR, RIGIDLY, LISTENING TO LAURA'S CAUSTIC VOICE... LISTENING TO HER TAUNT YOU...

SURPRISED, AREN'T YOU, CHARLIE? YOU NEVER *SUSPECTED* THE *TRUTH*, DID YOU? WELL, NOW YOU *KNOW!* NOW YOU KNOW *EVERYTHING!* AND *THIS* TIME, I *WON'T BOTCH* THINGS UP!

LAURA! YOU *WOULDN'T KILL ME*... NOT LIKE *THIS*... NOT IN *COLD BLOOD!*

WOULDN'T I, CHARLIE? *WOULDN'T* I? JUST YOU *WATCH* AND *SEE!* IT'S GOING TO BE SO *EASY*... SO *VERY* EASY. *THIS* TIME I WON'T TAKE *FOOLISH CHANCES*. *THIS* TIME, I'LL *DO IT RIGHT!*

THEN THE *WRECK* WE HAD... THE ONE THAT *CRIPPLED* ME. IT *WASN'T* AN *ACCIDENT* AT *ALL*. YOU *PLANNED* IT... *DELIBERATELY*...

THERE IS AN UGLINESS IN YOUR LOVELY WIFE'S FACE NOW... AN EVIL GRIMACE OF LOATHING AND HATRED THAT VEILS HER ATTRACTIVE FEATURES. SHE NODS. HER VOICE IS COLD, METHODIC...

YES, CHARLIE. I *DELIBERATELY DROVE OUR CAR OFF THE ROAD!* I *WANTED* TO KILL YOU! I COULDN'T STAND *LIVING* WITH YOU ANOTHER *MOMENT*...

LAURA...CHOKE... HOW COULD YOU...

LAURA'S VOICE RATTLES ON, BUT YOU DO NOT HEAR IT. YOUR THOUGHTS ARE RACING WILDLY...BACK ACROSS THOSE MONTHS...BACK TO THAT FATEFUL DAY. YOU AND LAURA WERE DRIVING UP TO THE LAKE HOUSE. YOU CAN SEE IT ALL SO CLEARLY. SHE AT THE WHEEL...YOU BESIDE HER, DREAMILY WATCHING THE ROAD SWEEP BY...

TAKE IT *EASY*, DEAR. WE HAVE THE *WHOLE WEEK-END* AHEAD OF US!

WAS I *GOING FAST*, CHARLIE? I DIDN'T *REALIZE* IT...

YOU CAN REMEMBER THAT PLACE WHERE THE ROAD TURNED SHARPLY. YOU CAN REMEMBER THE STRANGE CLICK YOU HEARD, AND THEN THE SWERVE AND LAURA'S SCREAM...

CHARLIE! I CAN'T STOP...

LAURA! MY GOD...

YOU CAN HEAR THE SQUEAL OF THE TIRES AS THE CAR CAREENED CRAZILY. YOU CAN SEE LAURA GOING OUT THE DOOR, AND YOU, STRUGGLING FRANTICALLY, TRYING TO CATCH THE STEERING WHEEL...

EEEEEEEEEEE...

WE'RE GOING TO CRASH...

AND YOU CAN STILL HEAR THE SPLINTERING THUNDERING CRASH AS THE CAR LEAPED WILDLY INTO THE GROVE OF TREES BESIDE THE SHARP TURN IN THE ROAD.

AND NOW YOU CAN SEE THE CLEAN WHITENESS OF THE HOSPITAL ROOM AND HEAR THE DOCTOR'S CHEERFUL VOICE...

IN A *FEW MONTHS* HE'LL BE *UP* AND *AROUND, GOOD AS NEW*, MRS. ASHLAND.

OH, *THANK YOU*, DOCTOR!

AND YOU CAN FEEL YOURSELF LYING THERE IN THAT HOSPITAL BED, GOING OVER THAT CRASH AGAIN AND AGAIN IN YOUR MIND. AND THEN...

DOCTOR! DOCTOR! OH, LORD...

WHAT *IS* IT, MR. ASHLAND?

DOCTOR! MY LEGS! MY ARMS! I...I CAN'T MOVE THEM!

NURSE! COME QUICKLY...

THE ENDLESS EXAMINATIONS. THE TESTS. THE COAXING AND PLEADING. YOU REMEMBER IT ALL...
TRY TO MOVE, CHARLIE! JUST TRY... A LITTLE!
I CAN'T! I CAN'T! I'M PARALYZED!
THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANYTHING PHYSICALLY WRONG WITH YOUR HUSBAND, MRS. ASHLAND. PERHAPS THE SHOCK OF THE CRASH BROUGHT THIS ON. IN ANY CASE, WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT HIS PARALYSIS IS PSYCHOSOMATIC.
YOU MEAN IT'S ALL IN HIS MIND? HE'S NOT REALLY PARALYZED?
THE PARALYSIS IS REAL, ALL RIGHT, MRS. ASHLAND. IT'S JUST THAT ITS CAUSES ARE TO BE FOUND IN HIS MIND RATHER THAN HIS BODY. PERHAPS WITH PLENTY OF REST, IN TIME...
I UNDERSTAND, DOCTOR.
AND NOW YOU KNOW THE TRUTH, CHARLES ASHLAND. YOUR WIFE STANDS BEFORE YOU, GRIMLY, PROUDLY, RUBBING YOUR NOSE IN THE TRUTH...
YES, CHARLES. I TRIED TO KILL YOU AND I FAILED. BUT THIS TIME I WILL NOT FAIL. IN AN HOUR OR SO I'LL WHEEL YOU OUTSIDE... DOWN TO THE MOORING DOCK...
'AND THE PETERSONS WILL BE OUT ON THEIR DOCK DOWN THE BEACH... AS USUAL. IT WILL BE JUST AS IT'S BEEN EVERY DAY FOR THE PAST MONTH. I'LL WAVE TO THEM...
HELLO, THERE!
HELLO, MRS. ASHLAND, HOW'S MR. ASHLAND FEELING TODAY?
'AND THEN I'LL TUCK YOUR BLANKET AROUND YOU AND KISS YOU...ACT THE LOVING, CARING WIFE...'
NOW YOU SOAK UP SOME SUN AND I'LL GO FOR MY SWIM. IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, JUST CALL!
I WILL, DEAR...
'AND THE PETERSONS WILL WATCH THE SAME OLD ROUTINE. AND THEY'LL SMILE AND NOD. AND I'LL SWIM OUT. BUT THEN, SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN...'
LAURA! LAURA!
MRS. ASHLAND!
MY GOD! HIS WHEELCHAIR IS ROLLING FORWARD!

'YES, CHARLIE. THE PETERSONS WILL WATCH HORRIFIED AND HELPLESS AS YOUR WHEEL CHAIR ROLLS TO THE EDGE OF THE MOORING DOCK AND DROPS OFF...'

LAURA! LAURA! YAAAAAAA

AND YOU'LL *DROWN*, CHARLIE! YOU'LL *DROWN* BECAUSE YOU'RE *PARALYZED*. NO ONE WILL BE ABLE TO *GET* TO YOU IN TIME...

HOW WILL YOU *DO* IT? HOW WILL YOU *MAKE* MY WHEEL CHAIR *ROLL OFF* THE DOCK, LAURA? THE *PETERSONS* WILL BE *WATCHING*...

THEY'RE *TOO FAR AWAY* TO SEE *THIS*, CHARLIE! IT'S *WIRE*, *THIN*, *BLACK*, *STRONG WIRE*...

NO...

YES, CHARLIE! I'M GOING TO *ATTACH* IT TO YOUR *WHEEL CHAIR*... *SWIM OUT*... AND *PULL YOU IN!*

NO!

AND YOU *WON'T* BE ABLE TO *CRY OUT*... *CALL* TO THE *PETERSONS*... BECAUSE YOUR *MOUTH* WILL BE *STUFFED* WITH THIS *RAG*...

WAIT, LAURA...

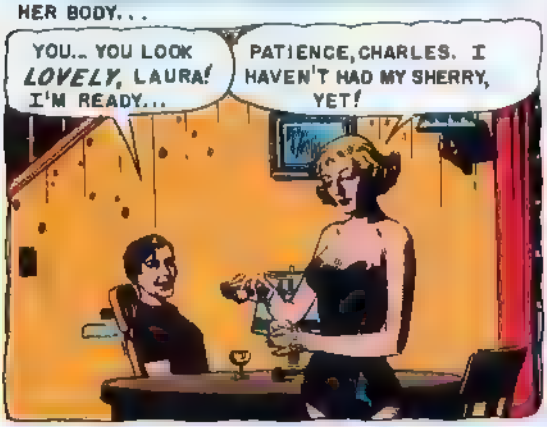
YOU SIT THERE, STIFFLY, AS LAURA RAMS THE COARSE RAG INTO YOUR DRY MOUTH. SHE GRINS AT YOU...

YOU THOUGHT I *LOVED* YOU, *DIDN'T* YOU, YOU *STUPID FOOL*? WELL, YOU WERE *WRONG*! I MARRIED YOU FOR *MONEY*... *ALL* THE *MONEY* I CAN *GET*. DIDN'T YOU *SUSPECT* WHEN I *INSISTED* THAT YOU *TAKE OUT THAT BIG FAT INSURANCE POLICY*?

NOW *I'M* GOING UPSTAIRS AND GET INTO MY *SUIT*. YOU JUST SIT HERE AND *THINK* ABOUT WHAT'S GOING TO *HAPPEN* TO YOU WHEN I COME *DOWN*...

GL-M-M-GGG...

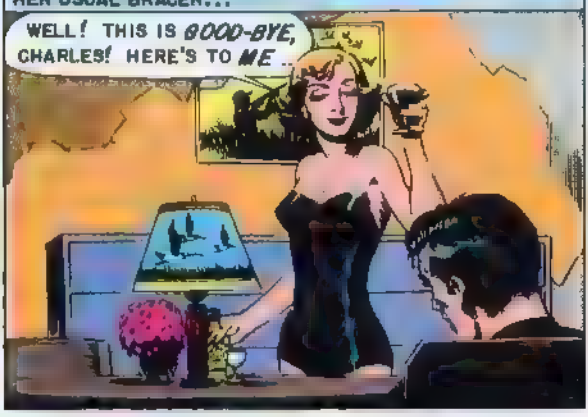
LAURA GLIDES ACROSS THE LIVING ROOM AND UP THE STAIRS. YOU SIT THERE, THINKING. YOU THINK ABOUT THE LAST FEW WEEKS UP HERE AT THE LAKE HOUSE. THE RITUAL! LAURA COMING DOWN... HER SUIT CLINGING TO HER, REVEALING EVERY LINE OF HER BODY...



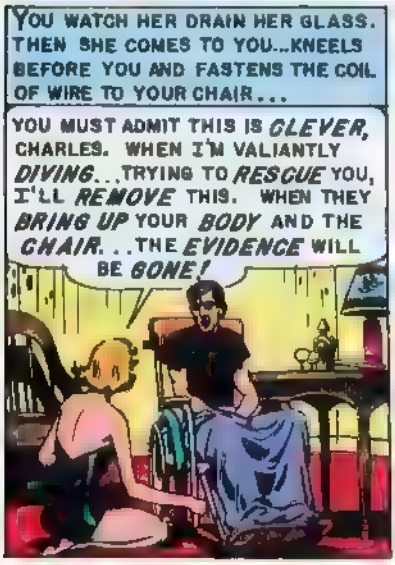
OF COURSE! THAT'S IT! THAT'S THE ANSWER! THAT'S YOUR WAY OUT, CHARLIE! EVERY DAY, BEFORE GOING SWIMMING, LAURA DRINKS A GLASS OF SHERRY! AND IF SHE DOES IT *THIS* TIME...

AND NOW IT'S TIME, CHARLES. THE RITUAL IS ABOUT TO BEGIN. ONLY THIS TIME IT WILL BE A RITUAL OF DEATH. AND YOU ARE READY FOR IT. IT'S TEN MINUTES LATER AND LAURA IS COMING DOWN...

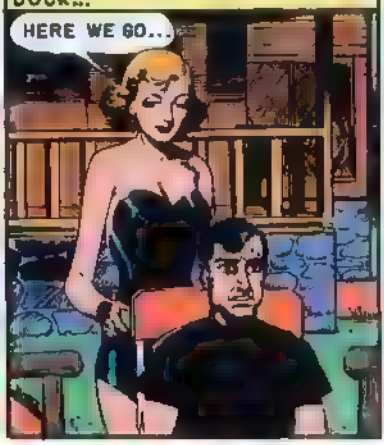
YOU SIT THERE NUMBLY, STIFFLY, THE RAG IN YOUR MOUTH SILENCING YOU. YOU WATCH AS LAURA POURS HER USUAL BRACER...



YOU WATCH HER DRAIN HER GLASS. THEN SHE COMES TO YOU...KNEELS BEFORE YOU AND FASTENS THE COIL OF WIRE TO YOUR CHAIR...


YOU MUST ADMIT THIS IS *CLEVER*, CHARLES. WHEN I'M VALIANTLY *DIVING*...TRYING TO *RESCUE* YOU, I'LL *REMOVE* THIS. WHEN THEY *BRING UP* YOUR *BODY* AND THE *CHAIR*...THE *EVIDENCE* WILL BE *GONE!*

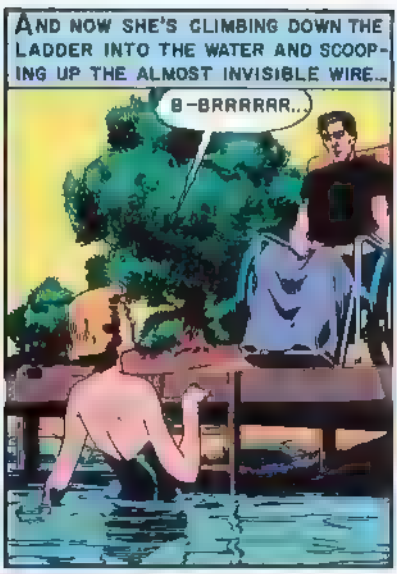
SHE HIDES THE COIL OF WIRE UNDER THE BLANKET TUCKED AROUND YOUR FEET. THEN SHE WHEELS YOU OUT ONTO THE PATIO AND DOWN TO THE DOCK...

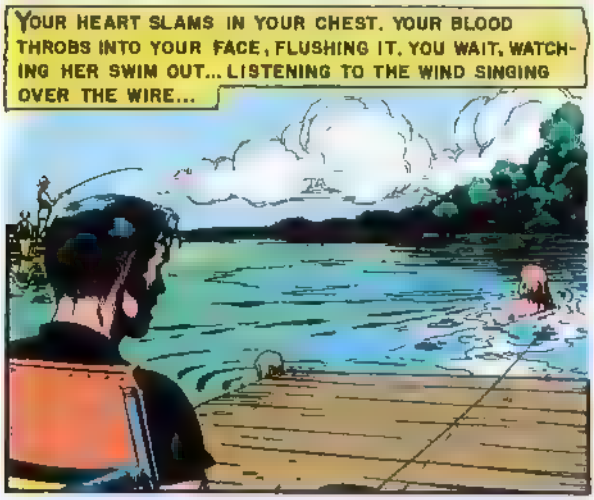


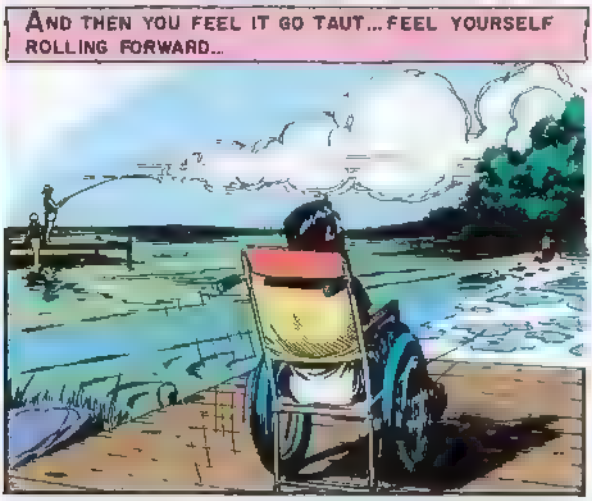
THE LAST RITUAL HAS BEGUN. THE PETERSONS WAVE THEIR USUAL GREETING...

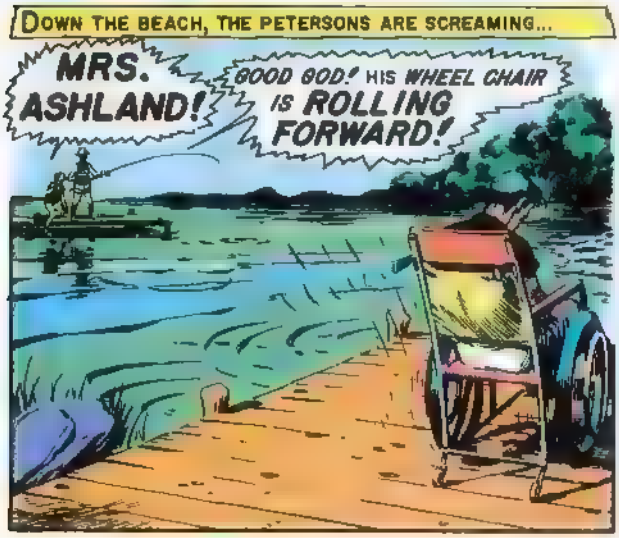
NOW YOU'RE ON THE DOCK AND LAURA IS FIDDLING WITH YOUR BLANKET, SLIPPING THE COIL OF WIRE OUT FROM BENEATH AND DROPPING IT INTO THE WATER...
GOOD-BYE, CHARLES!

AND NOW SHE'S KISSING YOU AND WATCHING THE PETERSONS OUT OF THE CORNER OF HER EYE...
IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, DEAR, JUST CALL...

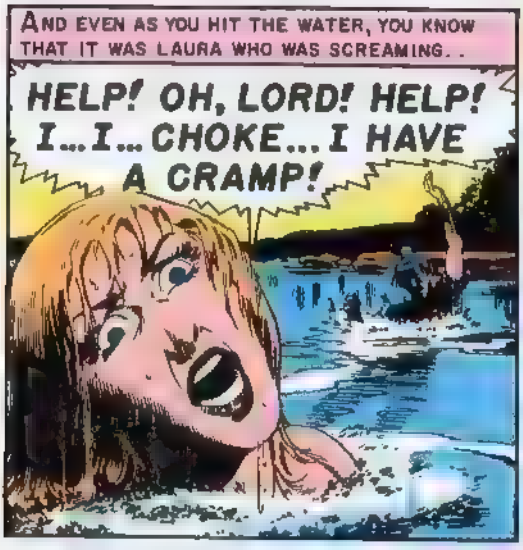

AND NOW SHE'S CLIMBING DOWN THE LADDER INTO THE WATER AND SCOOPING UP THE ALMOST INVISIBLE WIRE...
B-BRRRRRR...

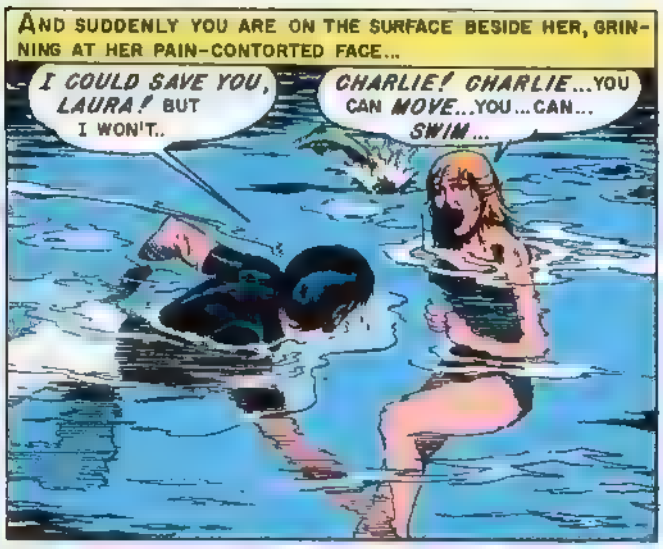

YOUR HEART SLAMS IN YOUR CHEST. YOUR BLOOD THROBS INTO YOUR FACE, FLUSHING IT. YOU WAIT, WATCHING HER SWIM OUT... LISTENING TO THE WIND SINGING OVER THE WIRE...

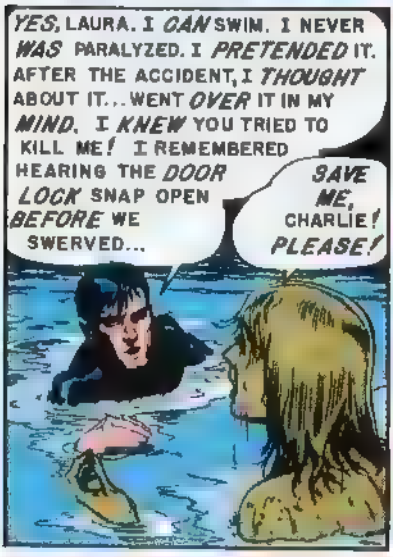

AND THEN YOU FEEL IT GO TAUT... FEEL YOURSELF ROLLING FORWARD...


DOWN THE BEACH, THE PETERSONS ARE SCREAMING...
MRS. ASHLAND!
GOOD GOD! HIS WHEEL CHAIR IS ROLLING FORWARD!

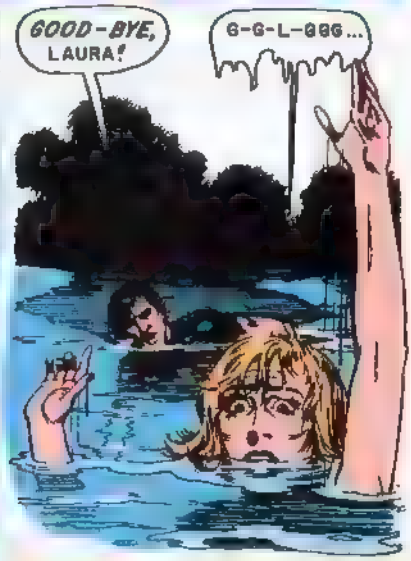
AND NOW YOUR CHAIR HAS REACHED THE DOCK EDGE AND IS PITCHING FORWARD AND YOU'RE FALLING TOWARD THE RIPPLING LAKE SURFACE...
EEEEEEEEEEEE....

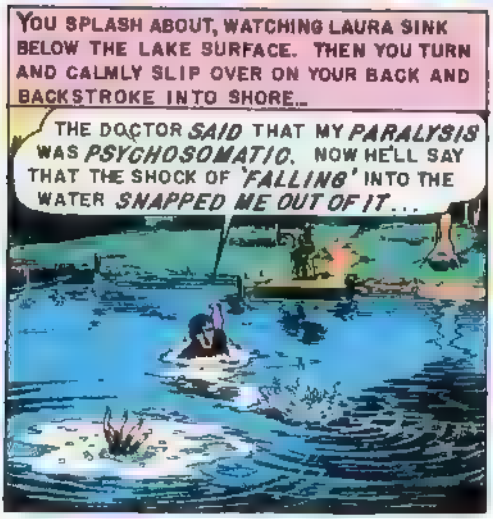

AND EVEN AS YOU HIT THE WATER, YOU KNOW THAT IT WAS LAURA WHO WAS SCREAMING..
HELP! OH, LORD! HELP! I...I... CHOKE... I HAVE A CRAMP!


AND SUDDENLY YOU ARE ON THE SURFACE BESIDE HER, GRINNING AT HER PAIN-CONTORTED FACE...
I COULD SAVE YOU, LAURA! BUT I WON'T..
CHARLIE! CHARLIE... YOU CAN MOVE... YOU... CAN... SWIM...


YES, LAURA. I CAN SWIM. I NEVER WAS PARALYZED. I PRETENDED IT. AFTER THE ACCIDENT, I THOUGHT ABOUT IT... WENT OVER IT IN MY MIND. I KNEW YOU TRIED TO KILL ME! I REMEMBERED HEARING THE DOOR LOCK SNAP OPEN BEFORE WE SWERVED...
SAVE ME, CHARLIE! PLEASE!

I PRAYED THAT I WAS WRONG ABOUT YOU, LAURA. I DECIDED TO GIVE YOU ENOUGH ROPE.. OR SHOULD I SAY WIRE...
I... CHOKE... CRAMP... CAN'T. STAY... UP...


GOOD-BYE, LAURA!
G-G-L-GGG...

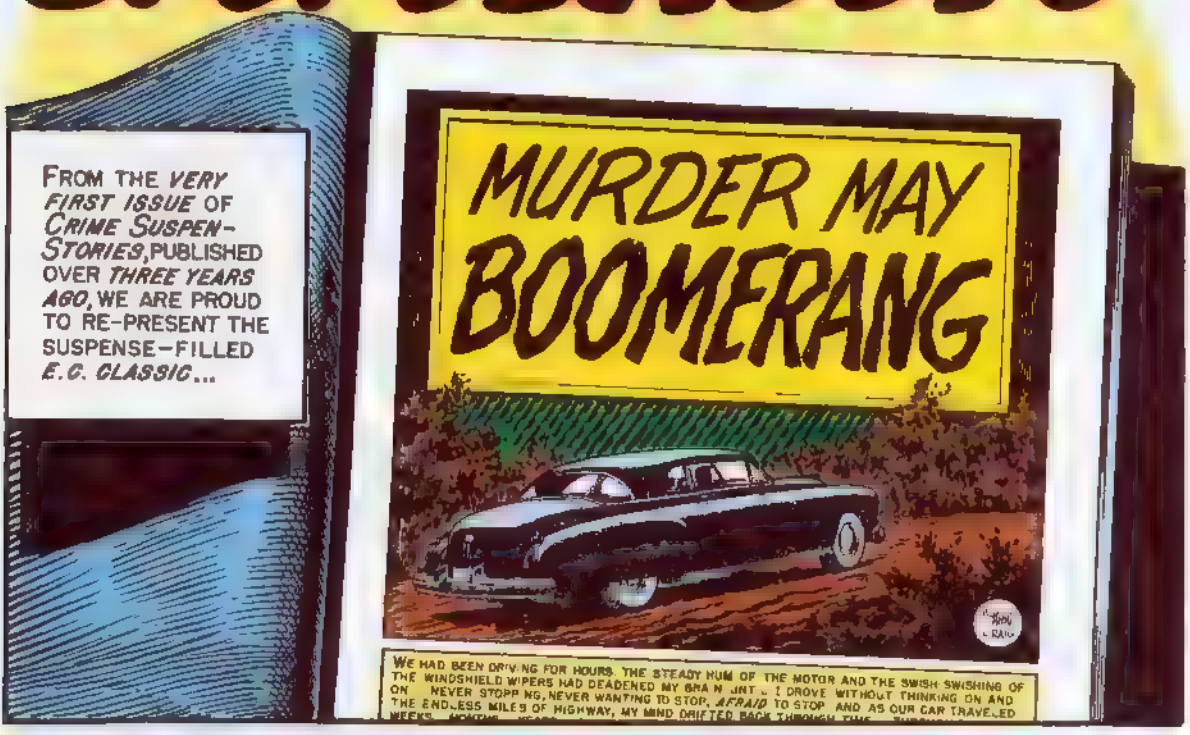

YOU SPLASH ABOUT, WATCHING LAURA SINK BELOW THE LAKE SURFACE. THEN YOU TURN AND CALMLY SLIP OVER ON YOUR BACK AND BACKSTROKE INTO SHORE..
THE DOCTOR SAID THAT MY PARALYSIS WAS PSYCHOSOMATIC. NOW HE'LL SAY THAT THE SHOCK OF 'FALLING' INTO THE WATER SNAPPED ME OUT OF IT...

YOU WALK SLOWLY UP TO THE HOUSE...
I TRIED TO SAVE LAURA. IT WAS TOO BAD SHE HAD THAT CRAMP. BUT DENATURED ALCOHOL DOES THAT TO A PERSON...

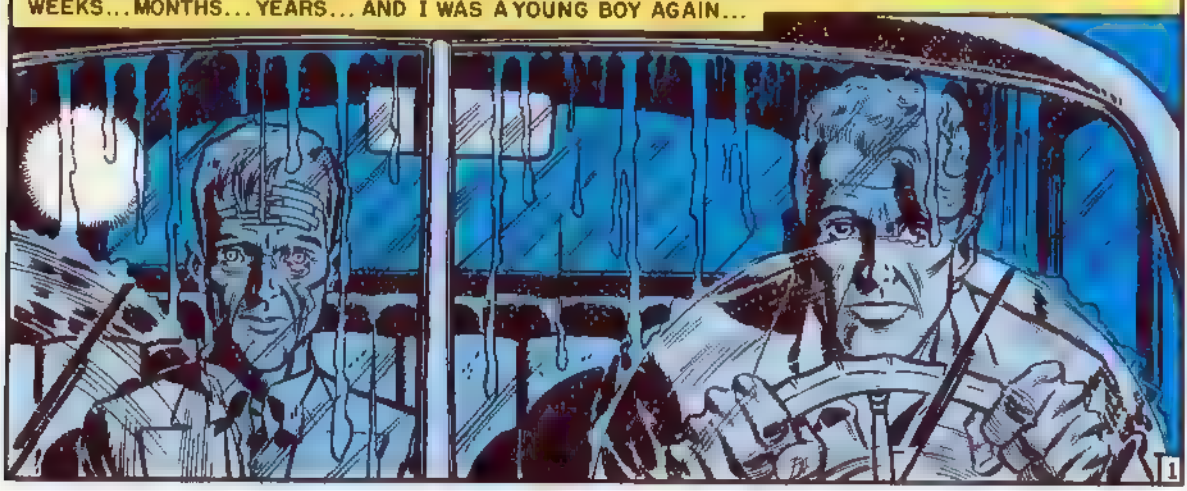
. . AND INTO THE LIVING ROOM. YOU PICK UP THE SHERRY BOTTLE AND CARRY IT INTO THE KITCHEN AND EMPTY ITS CONTAMINATED CONTENTS INTO THE SINK...
THE END

A Crime SuspenStories

E.C. CLASSIC


FROM THE VERY FIRST ISSUE OF CRIME SUSPEN-STORIES, PUBLISHED OVER THREE YEARS AGO, WE ARE PROUD TO RE-PRESENT THE SUSPENSE-FILLED E.C. CLASSIC...
MURDER MAY BOOMERANG
WE HAD BEEN DRIVING FOR HOURS. THE STEADY HUM OF THE MOTOR AND THE SWISH-SWISHING OF THE WINDSHIELD WIPERS HAD DEADENED MY BRAIN UNTIL I DROVE WITHOUT THINKING. ON AND ON... NEVER STOPPING, NEVER WANTING TO STOP, AFRAID TO STOP. AND AS OUR CAR TRAVELED THE ENDLESS MILES OF HIGHWAY, MY MIND DRIFTED BACK THROUGH TIME.. THROUGH THE PAST WEEKS... MONTHS... YEARS... AND I WAS A YOUNG BOY AGAIN...

WE HAD BEEN DRIVING FOR HOURS. THE STEADY HUM OF THE MOTOR AND THE SWISH-SWISHING OF THE WINDSHIELD WIPERS HAD DEADENED MY BRAIN UNTIL I DROVE WITHOUT THINKING. ON AND ON... NEVER STOPPING, NEVER WANTING TO STOP, AFRAID TO STOP. AND AS OUR CAR TRAVELED THE ENDLESS MILES OF HIGHWAY, MY MIND DRIFTED BACK THROUGH TIME.. THROUGH THE PAST WEEKS... MONTHS... YEARS... AND I WAS A YOUNG BOY AGAIN...



AFTER MY MOTHER HAD PASSED AWAY, MY FATHER AND I HAD BECOME CLOSER TO EACH OTHER THAN EVER. ALL THE LOVE WE SHARED FOR MOM WAS NOW GIVEN TO ONE ANOTHER...

GEE, DAD... IT SURE IS DIFFERENT AROUND THE HOUSE NOW THAT... MOM'S NOT HERE...

I KNOW, SON! BUT WE HAVE TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT. YOUR MOTHER WOULD WANT US BOTH TO BE STRONG.

DAD DIDN'T HAVE A WELL-PAYING JOB AND HE HAD TO WORK HARD. I WAS GOING TO GRAMMAR SCHOOL AND I REMEMBER HOW HE WOULD COME HOME AT NIGHT... SO EXHAUSTED!

HERE, DAD, SIT DOWN! I FIXED DINNER FOR YOU...

THANKS, LAD! YOU'RE A GOOD BOY... A GOOD BOY!

OH, WE HAD OUR GOOD TIMES. WE WENT TO THE CIRCUS AND WE SAW A COUPLE OF BALL GAMES... EVEN WHEN WE REALLY COULDN'T AFFORD IT...

HEY, DAD, LOOK! *A HOMER!*

HOW *ABOUT* THAT?

...OF COURSE, WE HAD TROUBLES TOO! I ALWAYS TRIED TO HELP...

QUIT SCHOOL AND GO TO WORK? NO, SON... WE DON'T NEED THE MONEY *THAT* BADLY. YOU GO TO SCHOOL... THAT'S MORE IMPORTANT! AND I WANT YOU TO PROMISE NEVER TO THINK ABOUT *QUITTING* SCHOOL AGAIN!

O.K., DAD... IF YOU SAY SO! I... I JUST DON'T LIKE TO SEE YOU WORKING SO HARD...

WHEN I GRADUATED FROM HIGH-SCHOOL, I WANTED TO LOOK FOR A JOB! BUT...

MY BOY, YOU HAVE TO STUDY *HARD* TO BE A CHEMICAL ENGINEER! A COLLEGE EDUCATION IS A *MUST!* AND DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT ME... I'LL BE ALL RIGHT!

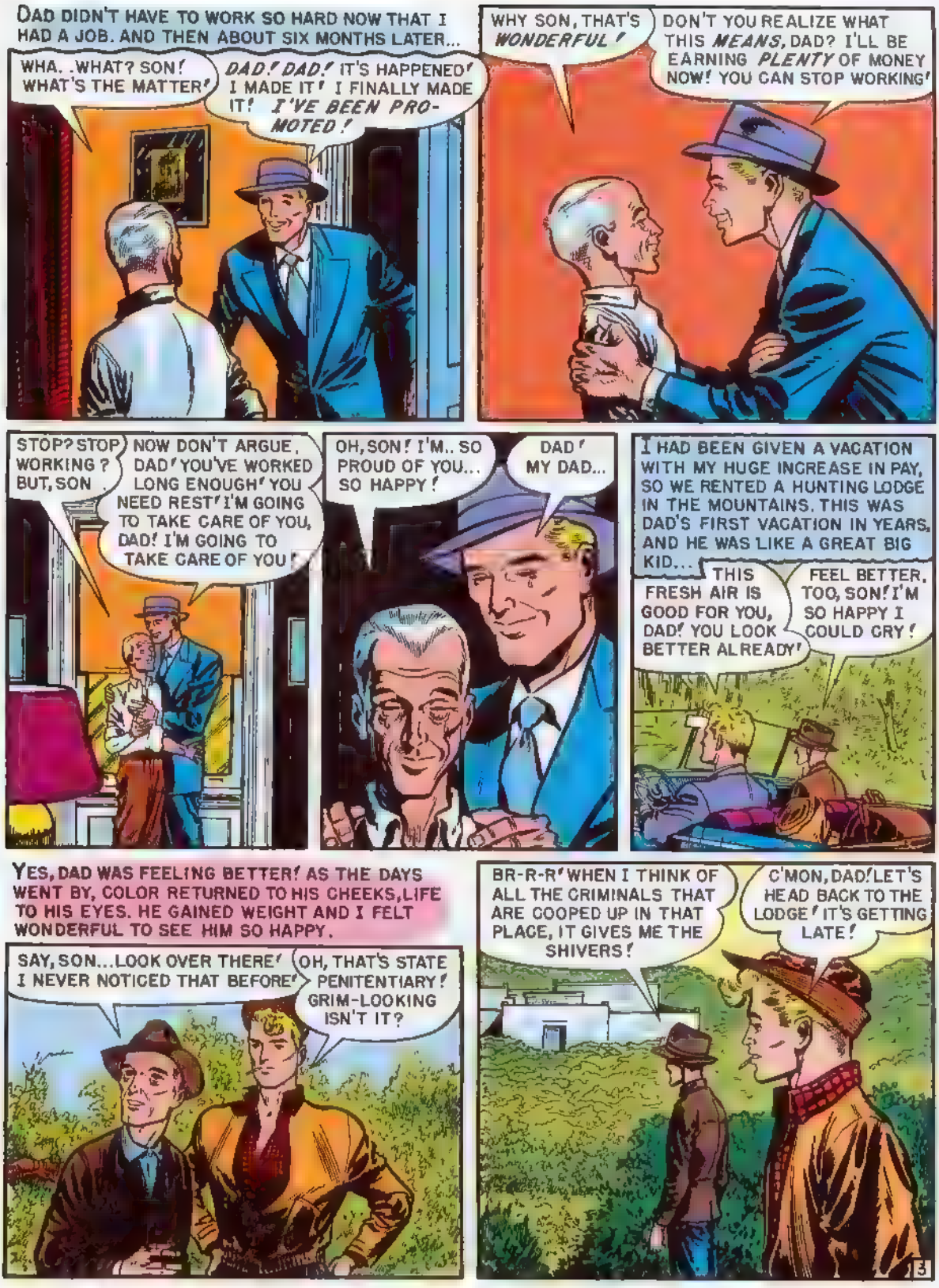
AND SO I WENT TO COLLEGE. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME DAD AND I HAD BEEN SEPARATED, AND I MISSED HIM AND WORRIED ABOUT HIM SOMETHING FIERCE! THEN...

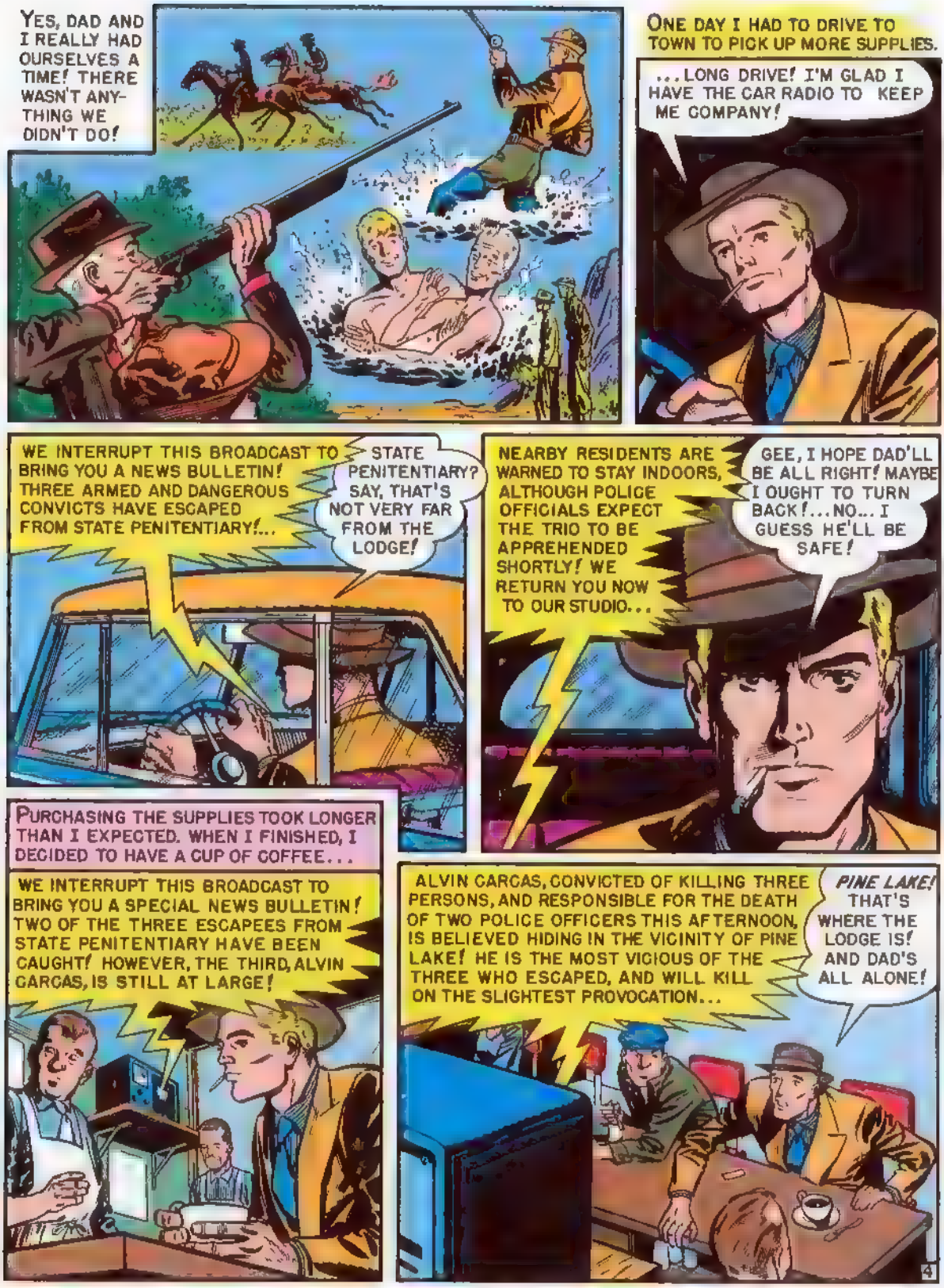
DEAR DAD,
WELL, MY COLLEGE DAYS ARE OVER. I PASSED MY EXAMS WITH HONORS AND HAVE BEEN OFFERED A JOB WITH THE BLAZER CHEMICAL CO. IT ISN'T MUCH, BUT IT'S A START, WITH A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVANCEMENT. AT LEAST, I'LL BE EARNING SOME MONEY, AND YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TAKE IT A LOT EASIER NOW.
SEE YOU NEXT WEEK.
LOVINGLY,
YOUR SON.

DAD MET ME AT THE TRAIN. I WAS SHOCKED TO SEE HOW ILL HE WAS... GAUNT... AND OH, SO TIRED!

DAD, DAD! GEE, IT'S SWELL TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

MY BOY! MY BOY! (SOB!) I'M... I'M SO *PROUD* OF YOU!

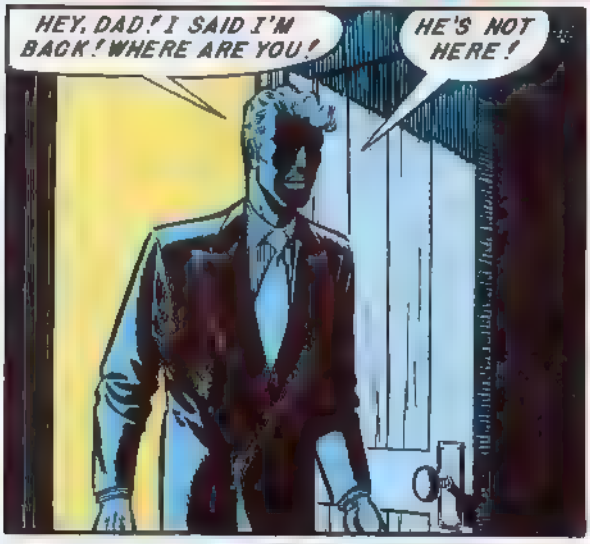

DAD DIDN'T HAVE TO WORK SO HARD NOW THAT I HAD A JOB. AND THEN ABOUT SIX MONTHS LATER...
WHA. .WHAT? SON! WHAT'S THE MATTER!
DAD! DAD! IT'S HAPPENED! I MADE IT! I FINALLY MADE IT! I'VE BEEN PROMOTED!
WHY SON, THAT'S WONDERFUL!
DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT THIS MEANS, DAD? I'LL BE EARNING PLENTY OF MONEY NOW! YOU CAN STOP WORKING!
STOP? STOP WORKING? BUT, SON
NOW DON'T ARGUE, DAD! YOU'VE WORKED LONG ENOUGH! YOU NEED REST! I'M GOING TO TAKE CARE OF YOU, DAD! I'M GOING TO TAKE CARE OF YOU!
OH, SON! I'M.. SO PROUD OF YOU... SO HAPPY!
DAD! MY DAD...
I HAD BEEN GIVEN A VACATION WITH MY HUGE INCREASE IN PAY, SO WE RENTED A HUNTING LODGE IN THE MOUNTAINS. THIS WAS DAD'S FIRST VACATION IN YEARS, AND HE WAS LIKE A GREAT BIG KID...
THIS FRESH AIR IS GOOD FOR YOU, DAD! YOU LOOK BETTER ALREADY!
FEEL BETTER, TOO, SON! I'M SO HAPPY I COULD CRY!
YES, DAD WAS FEELING BETTER! AS THE DAYS WENT BY, COLOR RETURNED TO HIS CHEEKS, LIFE TO HIS EYES. HE GAINED WEIGHT AND I FELT WONDERFUL TO SEE HIM SO HAPPY.
SAY, SON...LOOK OVER THERE! I NEVER NOTICED THAT BEFORE!
OH, THAT'S STATE PENITENTIARY! GRIM-LOOKING ISN'T IT?
BR-R-R! WHEN I THINK OF ALL THE CRIMINALS THAT ARE COOPED UP IN THAT PLACE, IT GIVES ME THE SHIVERS!
C'MON, DAD! LET'S HEAD BACK TO THE LODGE! IT'S GETTING LATE!
3

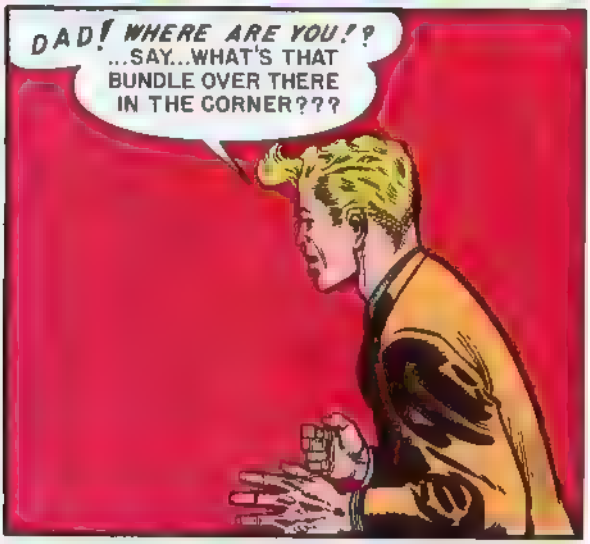

YES, DAD AND I REALLY HAD OURSELVES A TIME! THERE WASN'T ANYTHING WE DIDN'T DO!
ONE DAY I HAD TO DRIVE TO TOWN TO PICK UP MORE SUPPLIES.
...LONG DRIVE! I'M GLAD I HAVE THE CAR RADIO TO KEEP ME COMPANY!
WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST TO BRING YOU A NEWS BULLETIN! THREE ARMED AND DANGEROUS CONVICTS HAVE ESCAPED FROM STATE PENITENTIARY!...
STATE PENITENTIARY? SAY, THAT'S NOT VERY FAR FROM THE LODGE!
NEARBY RESIDENTS ARE WARNED TO STAY INDOORS, ALTHOUGH POLICE OFFICIALS EXPECT THE TRIO TO BE APPREHENDED SHORTLY! WE RETURN YOU NOW TO OUR STUDIO...
GEE, I HOPE DAD'LL BE ALL RIGHT! MAYBE I OUGHT TO TURN BACK!...NO... I GUESS HE'LL BE SAFE!
PURCHASING THE SUPPLIES TOOK LONGER THAN I EXPECTED. WHEN I FINISHED, I DECIDED TO HAVE A CUP OF COFFEE...
WE INTERRUPT THIS BROADCAST TO BRING YOU A SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN! TWO OF THE THREE ESCAPEES FROM STATE PENITENTIARY HAVE BEEN CAUGHT! HOWEVER, THE THIRD, ALVIN CARCAS, IS STILL AT LARGE!
ALVIN CARCAS, CONVICTED OF KILLING THREE PERSONS, AND RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF TWO POLICE OFFICERS THIS AFTERNOON, IS BELIEVED HIDING IN THE VICINITY OF PINE LAKE! HE IS THE MOST VICIOUS OF THE THREE WHO ESCAPED, AND WILL KILL ON THE SLIGHTEST PROVOCATION...
PINE LAKE! THAT'S WHERE THE LODGE IS! AND DAD'S ALL ALONE!

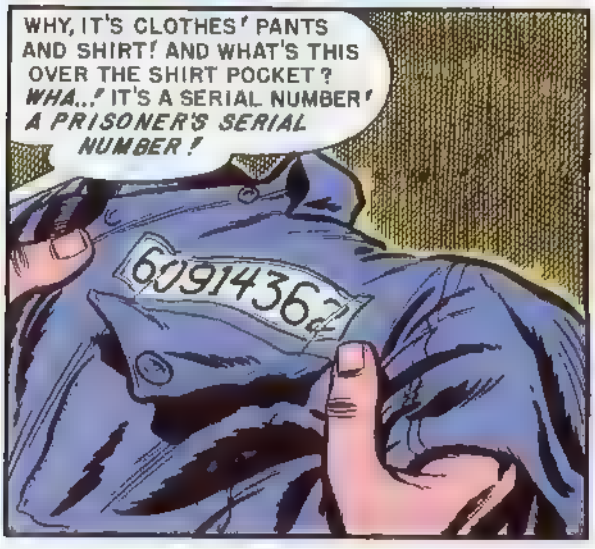
I SPED BACK TOWARDS THE LODGE! I WAS FRIGHTENED NOW... AFRAID THAT SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO DAD!

THE MILES FLEW BY BENEATH THE WHEELS! I HAD TO HURRY! I HAD BEEN CRAZY TO LEAVE DAD ALONE IN THE FIRST PLACE .

IT WAS AN ENDLESS DRIVE AND IT SEEMED LIKE AN ETERNITY BEFORE I SCREECHED TO A STOP IN FRONT OF THE LODGE...






WHY, IT'S CLOTHES! PANTS AND SHIRT! AND WHAT'S THIS OVER THE SHIRT POCKET? WHA..! IT'S A SERIAL NUMBER! A PRISONER'S SERIAL NUMBER!
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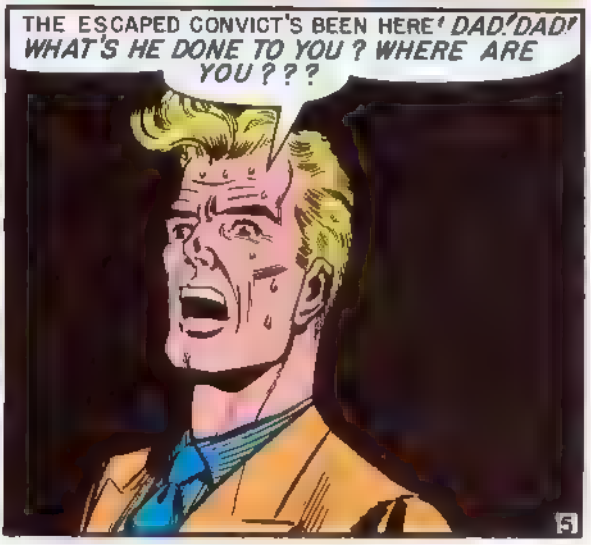
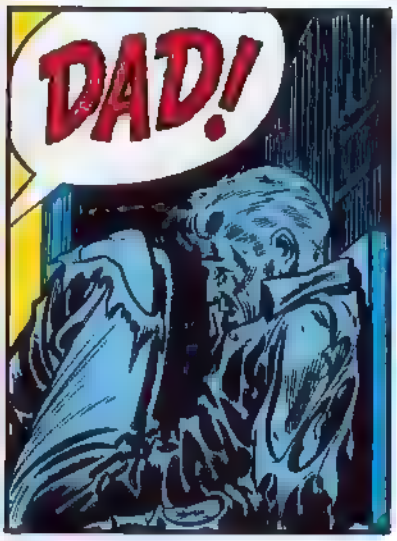
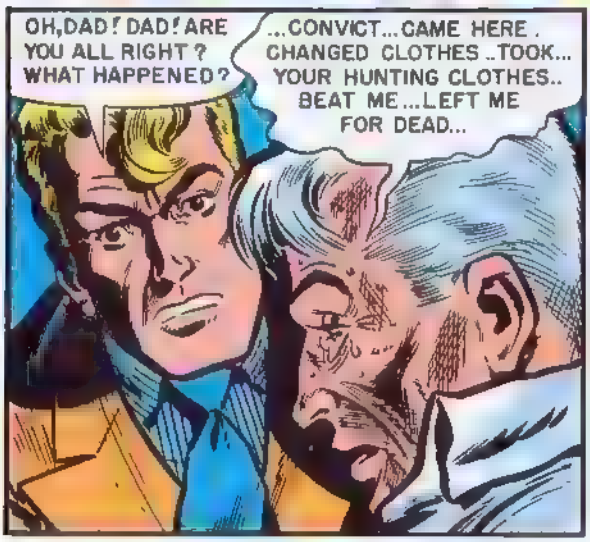
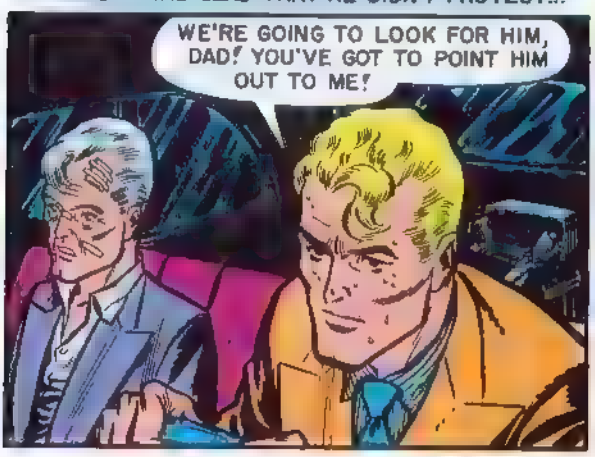




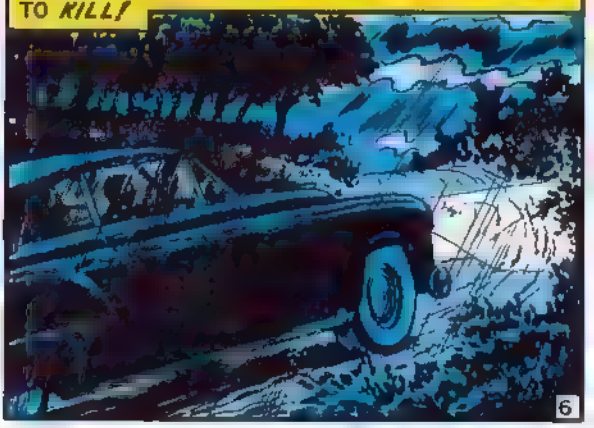

OH, DAD! DAD! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? WHAT HAPPENED?
...CONVICT... CAME HERE. CHANGED CLOTHES.. TOOK... YOUR HUNTING CLOTHES.. BEAT ME... LEFT ME FOR DEAD...

DAD WASN'T HURT BADLY, AND WHILE I PATCHED HIS CUTS AND BRUISES, HE LAPSED INTO SILENCE... A GLASSY, DAZED LOOK ON HIS FACE!

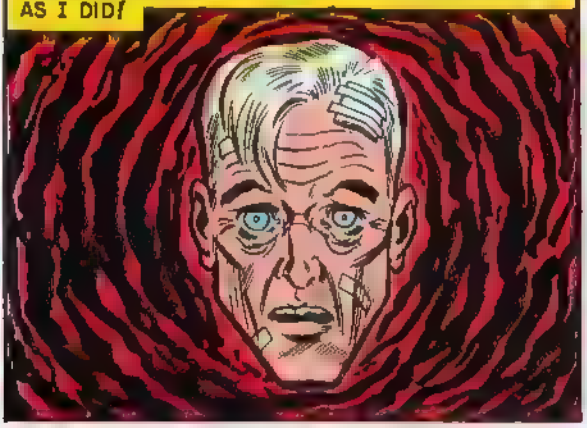
I HELPED HIM OUT TO THE CAR AND SAT HIM NEXT TO ME. HE KNEW WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO! AND I WAS GLAD THAT HE DIDN'T PROTEST...



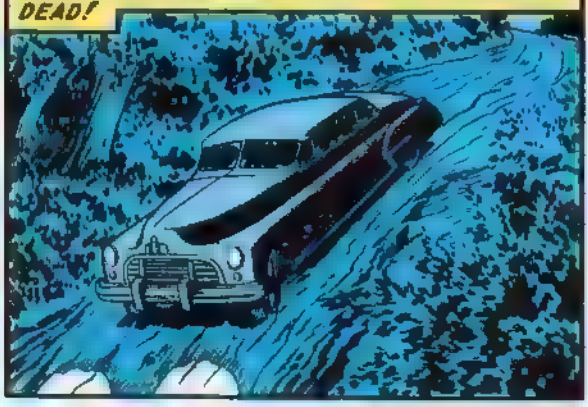
WE DROVE FOR A LONG WHILE. NIGHT WAS SETTING IN AND IT BEGAN TO DRIZZLE. WE DROVE SLOWLY, OVER ALL THE DESERTED BACK-WOODS ROADS... SEARCHING FOR THE MAN I WAS TO *KILL!*



EVERY SO OFTEN I GLANCED AT DAD! HE SAT THERE SILENTLY, STARING DAZEDLY OUT THE CAR WINDOW. HE WAS SUFFERING FROM SHOCK BUT HE WANTED TO FIND THE CONVICT ALMOST AS MUCH AS I DID!

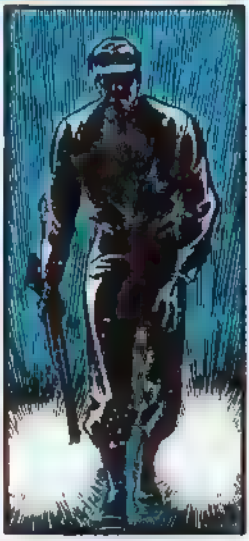


IT WAS GETTING DARKER NOW AND THE RAIN WAS COMING DOWN HEAVIER THAN BEFORE. THE LONGER IT TOOK TO SPOT THE KILLER, THE ANGRIER I BECAME! I WAS IMPATIENT TO WREAK MY REVENGE ON THE FILTHY SKUNK! I WANTED TO SEE HIM *DEAD!*



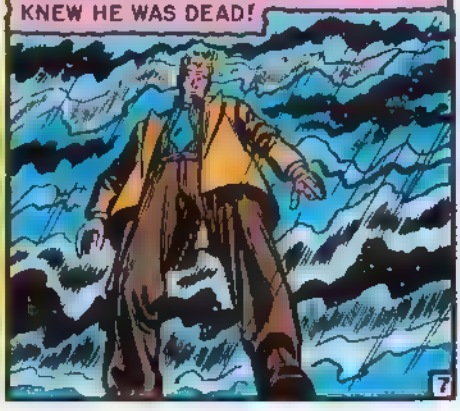
SUDDENLY, THE HEADLIGHTS PICKED OUT A FIGURE TRUDGING THE ROAD AHEAD OF US... A FIGURE WEARING HUNTING CLOTHES!

ALL THE HATRED I HELD FOR THAT ONE MAN ROSE WITHIN ME, CROWDING EVERYTHING ELSE FROM MY MIND! NOTHING ELSE MATTERED! I STEPPED ON THE ACCELERATOR.



MY ENTIRE BODY WAS TIGHTENED INTO A KNOT! DROPLETS OF SWEAT BURST OUT ON MY BROW AND THE MOTOR ROARED A DEATH CALL! BUT I HEARD NOTHING... I FELT NOTHING! EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD FADED... EXCEPT FOR THE LONE FIGURE IN THE ROAD.

SOMEHOW WE SKIDDED TO A STOP! I STEPPED OUT...TO MAKE CERTAIN I HAD DONE THE JOB WELL! AND WHEN I SAW THE BODY SPRAWLED GROTESQUELY ON THE MUDDY ROAD... I KNEW HE WAS DEAD!



ALL THE FURIOUS HATRED HAD LEFT ME NOW THAT IT WAS ALL OVER. I..I FELT EMPTY.. LIKE THERE WAS NOTHING INSIDE OF ME...LIKE MY BODY WAS ONLY A SHELL. AND I WAS SHAKING...

I...I GOT HIM FOR YOU, DAD! I GOT HIM FOR YOU. YOU'RE OKAY, NOW... EVERYTHING'S OKAY! WE...WE'LL GO BACK TO TOWN NOW...

SOMETIME LATER, WE STOPPED IN FRONT OF THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE. AS I SHUT OFF THE IGNITION, I SAW A MAN WAVING GOOD-NIGHT TO THE SHERIFF...PROBABLY A DEPUTY GOING OFF DUTY... AND HE WAS WEARING HUNTING CLOTHES...

SON! THERE! HE'S THE ONE! HE'S THE ONE!

SUDDENLY, I REALIZED WHAT A HORRIBLE MISTAKE I HAD MADE! DAD WAS OUT OF HIS MIND! HE *DIDN'T KNOW* WHO HAD BEATEN HIM...HE ONLY KNEW THE MAN WORE HUNTING CLOTHES!

I KNEW THEN I HAD KILLED AN INNOCENT MAN... AND THAT FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE, DAD WOULD POINT TO EVERY MAN HE SAW WEARING HUNTING CLOTHES AND WHISPER "SON! THERE! HE'S THE ONE! HE'S THE ONE!" IN A DAZE, I PULLED AWAY FROM THE CURB AND DROVE OUT OF TOWN...

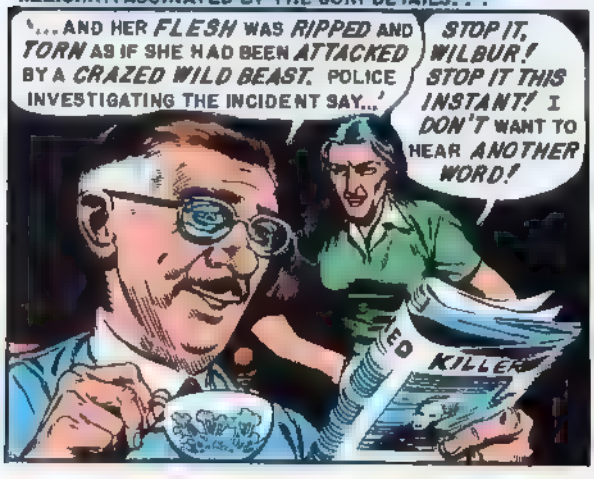
WE HAVE BEEN DRIVING FOR HOURS. THE STEADY HUM OF THE MOTOR AND THE SWISH-SWISHING OF THE WINDSHIELD WIPERS HAS DEADENED MY BRAIN UNTIL I DRIVE WITHOUT THINKING...ON AND ON... NEVER STOPPING... NEVER WANTING TO STOP... *AFRAID* TO STOP! AND AS OUR CAR TRAVELS THE ENDLESS MILES OF HIGHWAY, MY MIND DRIFTS BACK THROUGH TIME... THROUGH THE PAST WEEKS ... MONTHS... YEARS... AND I AM A YOUNG BOY AGAIN...

THE END...

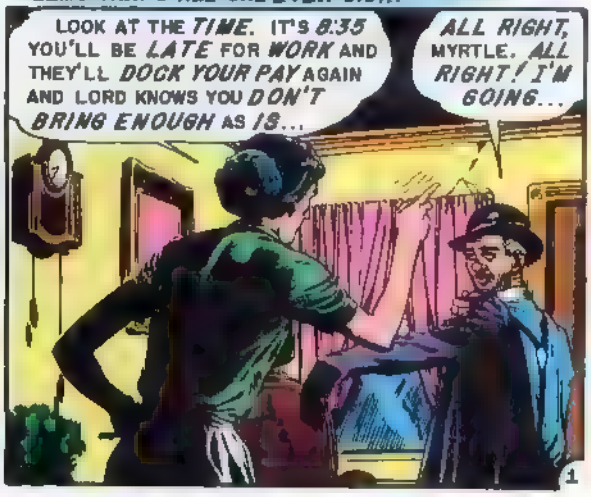
ABOUT PHASE

IT WAS ON THE NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 8TH, 1952, WHEN THE FULL MOON RODE HIGH IN A FLUID SKY AND CAST BLACK SHADOWS ACROSS WET MIST-FILLED COBBLESTONE STREETS, THAT THE FIRST MURDER OCCURRED. A WOMAN, MAKING HER WAY UP A DESERTED WINDING LONDON ALLEY, HEARD THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS ECHOING IN THE FOG BEHIND HER. WHEN SHE STOPPED TO LISTEN, THE FOOTSTEPS FOLLOWING HER STOPPED TOO. WHEN SHE TURNED AND HURRIED ON, THE FOOTSTEPS BEGAN AGAIN, HURRYING AFTER HER. FEAR GRIPPED HER. TERROR CLUTCHED AT HER MADLY RACING HEART. TEARS STREAMED FROM HER EYES. AND WHEN SHE HEARD THE LOW THROATED GROWL, SHE TURNED, SCREAMING, TO SEE THE SILHOUETTE SPRINGING AT HER..ITS EYES BURNING ITS TEETH FLASHING IN THE MOONLIGHT

AT LEAST THAT'S THE WAY *ONE* IMAGINATIVE REPORTER DESCRIBED THE MURDER IN HIS COLUMN IN '*THE LONDON NEWS!* I REMEMBER READING HIS WORDS WITH GREAT RELISH... FASCINATED BY THE GORY DETAILS...

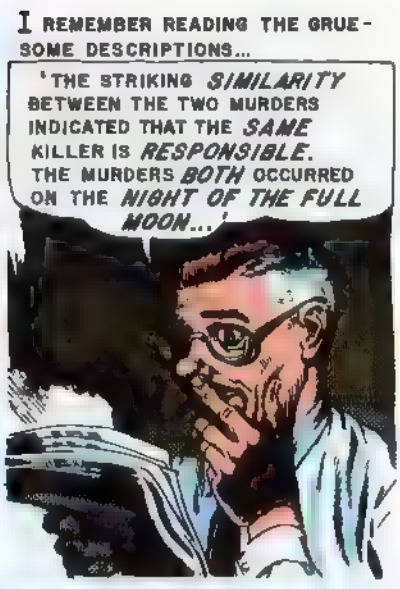

'...AND HER *FLESH* WAS *RIPPED* AND *TORN* AS IF SHE HAD BEEN *ATTACKED* BY A *CRAZED WILD BEAST.* POLICE INVESTIGATING THE INCIDENT SAY...'
STOP IT, WILBUR! STOP IT THIS INSTANT! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR *ANOTHER WORD!*
KILLER

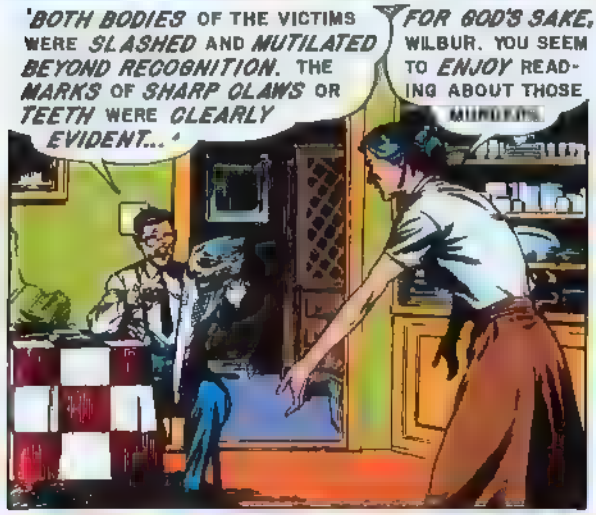
AND I REMEMBER MY WIFE, MYRTLE, YELLING AT ME TO BE QUIET! MYRTLE WAS *ALWAYS* YELLING AT ME! IT SEEMS THAT'S ALL SHE *EVER* DID...

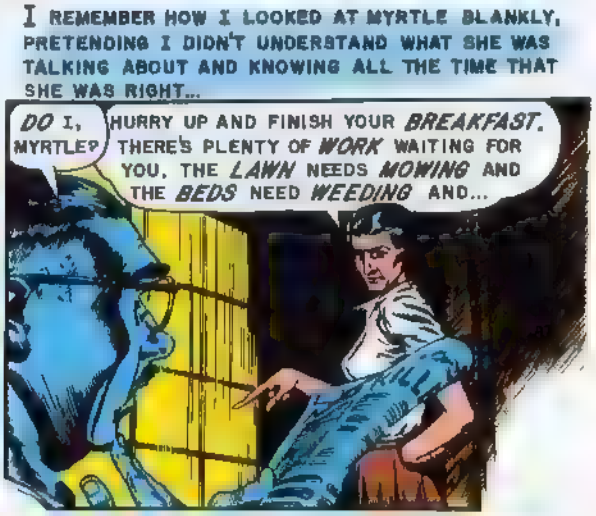

LOOK AT THE *TIME.* IT'S *8:35* YOU'LL BE *LATE* FOR *WORK* AND THEY'LL *DOCK YOUR PAY* AGAIN AND LORD KNOWS YOU *DON'T BRING ENOUGH* AS *IS*...
ALL RIGHT, MYRTLE. *ALL RIGHT! I'M GOING...*

THE MURDER WAS THE TALK OF LONDON. AS I RODE DOWNTOWN IN THE BUS, I LISTENED TO WHAT THE PEOPLE WERE SAYING...
THERE WAS A FULL MOON LAST NIGHT!
AND IT SAYS HERE THAT SHE'D BEEN ATTACKED BY SOME CRAZED WILD ANIMAL...

AS I SAID, THAT WAS THE FIRST MURDER. THE SECOND OCCURRED ABOUT A MONTH LATER. THE NIGHT OF DECEMBER 5TH, TO BE PRECISE...
EXTRA... EXTRA... BEAST KILLER STRIKES AGAIN!
WOMAN'S BODY FOUND... PAPER, MISTER?
YES, THANK YOU...


I REMEMBER READING THE GRUESOME DESCRIPTIONS...
'THE STRIKING SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE TWO MURDERS INDICATED THAT THE SAME KILLER IS RESPONSIBLE. THE MURDERS BOTH OCCURRED ON THE NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON...'


'BOTH BODIES OF THE VICTIMS WERE SLASHED AND MUTILATED BEYOND RECOGNITION. THE MARKS OF SHARP CLAWS OR TEETH WERE CLEARLY EVIDENT...'
FOR GOD'S SAKE, WILBUR, YOU SEEM TO ENJOY READING ABOUT THOSE MURDERS.


I REMEMBER HOW I LOOKED AT MYRTLE BLANKLY, PRETENDING I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT AND KNOWING ALL THE TIME THAT SHE WAS RIGHT...
DO I, MYRTLE?
HURRY UP AND FINISH YOUR BREAKFAST. THERE'S PLENTY OF WORK WAITING FOR YOU. THE LAWN NEEDS MOWING AND THE BEDS NEED WEEDING AND...

I REMEMBER HOW I HAD TO CONTROL MYSELF THAT MORNING AFTER THE SECOND MURDER WHEN MYRTLE STARTED NAGGING ME AGAIN...ORDERING ME AROUND... CRITICIZING ME... INSULTING ME...
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A LAZY GOOD-FOR-NOTHING, WILBUR FENWICK. WHY I EVER MARRIED YOU, I'LL NEVER KNOW!
ALL RIGHT, MYRTLE! ALL RIGHT...

AND I REMEMBER HOW I KNELT IN THE GARDEN AND GRIPPED THE HAND-RAKE TIGHTLY AND RIPPED SAVAGELY AT THE BEDS AND PRETENDED THE SOIL WAS MYRTLE'S SNEERING FACE...
SOMEDAY SOON I'LL BE RID OF YOU, MYRTLE. SOMEDAY I'LL...

THE THIRD MURDER OCCURRED ON THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 2nd, THIS YEAR. AGAIN, A FULL MOON PEERED THROUGH THE FOG OVER LONDON. AGAIN, A LONE WOMAN MADE HER WAY DOWN A DESERTED WET STREET... FOOTSTEPS RESOUNDING BEHIND HER..

GASP.. GASP..GASP.

AND FOR THE THIRD TIME, A SCREAM RESOUNDED INTO THE MIST-FILLED LONDON NIGHT AS A SAVAGE FIGURE SPRUNG FROM THE SHADOWS...

EEAAAAAAGHHH!

AND I REMEMBER THE HEADLINES THE NEXT MORNING.

'MOON-MAD WEREWOLF KILLER STRIKES AGAIN!' THIRD VICTIM'S BODY FOUND SHREDDED AND TORN. ALL OF LONDON IN PANIC.'

A WOMAN ISN'T SAFE ON THE STREETS AT NIGHT ANYMORE...

I REMEMBER HOW I GLEEFULLY POINTED OUT TO MYRTLE...

THEY CALL THE KILLER MOON-MAD, MYRTLE. THEY SAY HE OBVIOUSLY GOES OUT OF HIS MIND WHEN THE MOON IS FULL...BECOMES A SAVAGE BEAST...A WEREWOLF!

A WEREWOLF. BUT I THOUGHT WEREWOLVES DIDN'T EXIST!

...HOW I EXPLAINED...

THEY DON'T... NOT IN THE TRUE SENSE. BUT THERE IS A FORM OF INSANITY WHICH GAVE BIRTH TO THE WEREWOLF LEGEND. THE SUFFERER LUSTS FOR BLOOD AND FLESH WHEN THE MOON IS FULL.' IT'S CALLED LYCANTHROPY...

SOMEONE SUFFERING FROM LYCANTHROPY IS ACTUALLY MENTALLY ILL! HE'S NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HE DOES! WHEN THEY CATCH THIS MANIAC THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO HANG HIM BECAUSE HE WAS SUFFERING FROM TEMPORARY INSANITY WHEN HE COMMITTED THESE MURDERS...

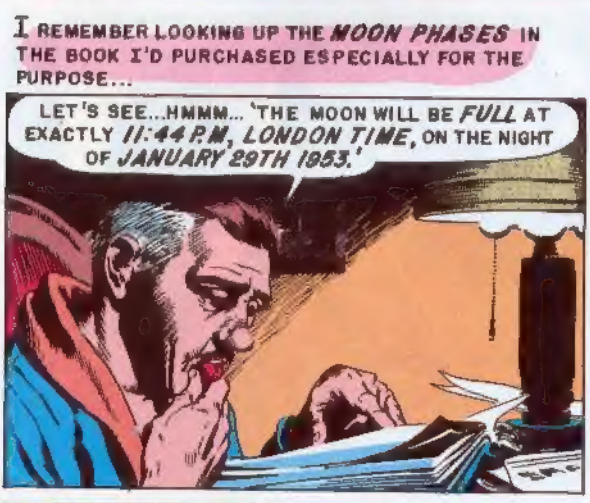
IN OTHER WORDS, MYRTLE, HE WON'T DIE. THEY'LL PUT HIM IN AN INSTITUTION FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE. HE WON'T DIE! THEY WON'T HANG HIM. THEY THEY...

SUDDENLY I REALIZED WHAT I WAS SAYING! I STOPPED. I LOOKED AT MYRTLE. I WATCHED HER EYES WIDEN AND HER FACE PALE. I GOT UP.
WELL... I'M OFF TO WORK!
Y-YES, WILBUR
I REMEMBER AS I LEFT THE HOUSE, I CURSED MYSELF FOR SHOWING MY FEELINGS. I WONDERED IF MYRTLE HAD READ WHAT WAS IN MY MIND... MY PLAN... MY WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL PLAN...
WILBUR...
CHOKE...
I TURNED. MYRTLE STOOD ON THE STEPS OF OUR SQUALID LITTLE SUBURBAN HOME, GLARING AT ME...
Y-YES, MYRTLE?
YOU FORGOT YOUR UMBRELLA. HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU TO TAKE YOUR UMBRELLA! HONESTLY, IF YOUR HEAD WASN'T TIED ON, YOU'D...
MYRTLE WAS YELLING AT ME AGAIN. I BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF. MY WONDERFUL PLAN AND I WERE SAFE...
YES, MYRTLE.
AND COME RIGHT HOME, FROM WORK. THERE'RE WINDOWS TO WASH AND FLOORS TO SCRUB... AND...
I SMILED AS I BOARDED THE BUS. I SMILED IN ANTICIPATION. IN A MONTH, MYRTLE WOULD BE NO MORE. IN A MONTH, MYRTLE WOULD BE DEAD...
THEY SAY THE KILLER IS INSANE!
THEY SAY HE WON'T DIE WHEN THEY CATCH HIM
BUS STOP
MY PLAN WAS SO SIMPLE. I WOULD KILL MYRTLE ON THE NEXT NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON...
GGGHAAAAAAAAAAHH!
THEN I WOULD CONFESS..
I AM YOUR MOON-MAD WEREWOLF KILLER...
GOOD LORD!
INSPECTOR! COME IN HERE... QUICKLY!

...AND THEY WOULD FIND...
WHEN THIS MAN COMMITTED HIS DASTARDLY DEEDS, HE WAS SUFFERING FROM A FORM OF TEMPORARY INSANITY COMMONLY KNOWN AS LYCANTHROPY...

...THEY WOULD RECOMMEND...
...THAT HE BE COMMITTED TO AN INSTITUTION FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE FOR THERAPY AND CURE...

AND IN A FEW SHORT YEARS, I'D BE DISCHARGED... CURED OF MY 'INSANITY' AND FREE OF NAGGING YELLING MYRTLE...
GOOD-BYE, MR. FENWICK! GOOD LUCK!
GOOD-BYE... AND THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU'VE DONE FOR ME!


I REMEMBER LOOKING UP THE MOON PHASES IN THE BOOK I'D PURCHASED ESPECIALLY FOR THE PURPOSE...
LET'S SEE...HMMM... 'THE MOON WILL BE FULL AT EXACTLY 11:44 P.M, LONDON TIME, ON THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 29TH 1953.'

AND I REMEMBER WAITING PATIENTLY ALL DURING THAT MONTH OF JANUARY... STEELING MYSELF AGAINST MYRTLE'S INCESSANT ONSLAUGHTS...
THE STOVE ISN'T WORKING AND THERE'S NO HOT WATER AND WHY YOU DON'T GET BUSY AND FIX IT INSTEAD OF SITTING AROUND. AND...

I REMEMBER THOSE COLD JANUARY NIGHTS WHEN MYRTLE WAS ASLEEP... POURING OVER THE CLIPPINGS I'D SAVED... CLIPPINGS OF THE PREVIOUS FULL-MOON MURDERS...
I'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERY DETAIL IS THE SAME! EVERY DETAIL!

AND I REMEMBER THE EVENING OF JANUARY 29TH... COMING HOME FROM WORK... EAGER WITH ANTICIPATION... LOOKING UP AT A CLEAR WINTRY STAR-STUDDED SKY...
SOON THE FULL MOON WILL BE UP... AND MYRTLE... HEH, HEH... MYRTLE WILL BE DEAD...

I REMEMBER LISTENING TO HER RAVING AND RANTING ALL THAT EVENING... AND FINALLY BREATHING A SIGH OF RELIEF WHEN, AT ABOUT 10 P.M., SHE ANNOUNCED...
I'M GOING TO BED!
GOOD-NIGHT, MYRTLE!

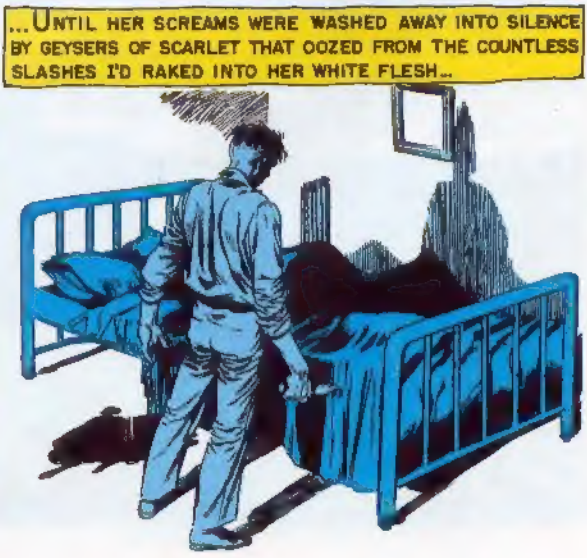
I REMEMBER SITTING AND WATCHING THE HANDS OF THE CLOCK CREEP AROUND TO ELEVEN...ELEVEN-THIRTY...

I REMEMBER GETTING UP, BATHED IN PERSPIRATION, AT ELEVEN-FORTY...

...AND GOING DOWN INTO THE CELLAR AND GETTING THE LITTLE HAND-RAKE WITH THE RAZOR-SHARP TEETH...
...THE LITTLE HAND-RAKE THAT WOULD RIP AND TEAR AND MUTILATE MYRTLE'S FLESH LIKE CLAWS OR TEETH....

...AND STAMPING INTO MYRTLE'S DARKENED BEDROOM...
WHO...WHO'S THERE? WILBUR? IS THAT YOU?
YES, MYRTLE... DEAR...

...AND FALLING UPON HER FLAILING SCREAMING BODY WITH ALL OF THE SAVAGE FURY I COULD MUSTER... SWINGING THE HAND-RAKE...BACK AND FORTH... BACK AND FORTH...


...UNTIL HER SCREAMS WERE WASHED AWAY INTO SILENCE BY GEYSERS OF SCARLET THAT OOZED FROM THE COUNTLESS SLASHES I'D RAKED INTO HER WHITE FLESH...

AND I REMEMBER, AFTERWARD, GOING DOWNSTAIRS AND MAKING A PHONE CALL...

GIVE ME... GIVE ME... GASP... SCOTLAND YARD...

WHEN THE INSPECTORS ARRIVED FROM SCOTLAND YARD, I TOOK THEM UP TO MYRTLE'S BEDROOM AND SHOWED THEM HER SHREDDED AND TORN BODY...

GOOD LORD! CHOKE...

...AND I ANNOUNCED...

I AM YOUR MOON-MAD WEREWOLF KILLER...

OH?

I REMEMBER HOW THEY TOOK ME DOWN TO THE YARD AND LISTENED TO MY WELL-REHEARSED STORY...

THE FULL MOON! IT... IT DOES THINGS TO ME... MAKES ME A WILD BEAST... MAKES ME LUST FOR FLESH AND BLOOD...

HMMM...

I REMEMBER HOW THEY SHOOK THEIR HEADS AND SAID...

I'M AFRAID YOU'LL HAVE TO STAND TRIAL, MR. FENWICK... FOR WILLFUL FIRST-DEGREE MURDER...

NO! NO! I'M MOON-MAD! I'M LYCANTHROPIC! I... I... SOB... SOB...

I REMEMBER HOW I STOOD BEFORE THE JUDGE AND LISTENED AS HE PASSED SENTENCE UPON ME...

FOR THE WILLFUL AND PREMEDITATED MURDER OF YOUR WIFE, MYRTLE FENWICK, I SENTENCE YOU TO BE HANGED BY THE NECK UNTIL YOU ARE DEAD... AND MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY ON YOUR SOUL...

IN A FEW MINUTES, I'M GOING TO DIE. MY PLAN FAILED COMPLETELY. I MURDERED THOSE OTHER THREE WOMEN FOR NOTHING. YOU SEE, THEY KNEW I WASN'T MOON-MAD. THEY KNEW I WASN'T LYCANTHROPIC. FOR THERE WAS NO FULL MOON ON THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 29TH, 1953. BETWEEN 11:06 P.M. AND 12:29 A.M., THERE WAS A TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE MOON...

THE END

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